

## OPINION

# Climate Action

Harborough Climate Action

## What heat-leaking homes cost us

**H**eating our homes accounts for just under a third of the country's greenhouse gas emissions each year. This means that as we tackle the climate crisis, making our homes more energy-efficient is crucial.

Just over half of all households in the UK live in draughty, heat-leaking homes with Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings of D to G. Admittedly this is better than the situation in 2011, when 8 out of 10 homes or more were in the D to G range. However, most of the improvement was made in 2011 to 2013. Since then, progress has been at a snail's pace and with the huge jump in energy prices, the chickens have come home to roost.

This is what one Harbor-

ough resident told us recently about her problems with cold and damp: "Cold and damp really worried me in case it affected my baby's health. Mould growth on the cot meant I had to replace it. Also got mould on my clothes. Charity support to replace the mattress and some clothes as I couldn't afford it. Can't afford to heat the place very well."

Her story is far from unusual across the country. Left Out in the Cold, a report just published by the Institute of Health Equity at University College London, estimates that almost a third of UK households are at risk of having to live in cold homes. Being unable to keep warm has severe effects on health, being shown to cause high blood pressure,



breathing problems and a greater chance of picking up winter virus infections. It also doubles the risk of developing mental health problems. As well as bringing misery to those directly affected, this imposes huge costs on us all as a society. Left Out in the Cold reports that the Building Research Establishment (BRE) estimates that the leakiest homes – those with EPC grades F and G – cost

**A programme of street-by-street home insulation improvements is needed, says Harborough Climate Action**

the NHS more than £500m a year and the total cost of our poorly insulated housing stock to the UK is over £15bn a year due to increased costs to the NHS, increased costs of social care, lost productivity due to illness caused by cold and damp and higher energy bills paid by those living in heat-leaking homes.

When the costs of the extra greenhouse gas emissions from these homes are taken into account the bill rises to over £18bn.

Of course, there are people who live in energy-inefficient homes who can still afford to stay warm as they enjoy higher incomes. They can and should be investing in energy-saving home improvements in their own self-interest as well as to

help save the planet. However, those who cannot afford to heat their homes properly can't afford to pay for insulation and heating upgrades either as the costs range from £6,000 to £13,500 according to the BRE.

This is why Harborough Climate Action is supporting the United for Warm Homes campaign. We call upon our MPs and all Parliamentary candidates in the General Election to support a programme of street-by-street home insulation improvements, starting with the leakiest homes.

Failure to act will not only perpetuate hardship and ill-health; it will worsen the climate crisis.

Find out more by going to [www.sustainableharborough-community.co.uk/hca](http://www.sustainableharborough-community.co.uk/hca)